

Lord of Atlantis



NEVER BEFORE
PUBLISHED IN
BOOK OR ANY
OTHER FORM

COMMANDER RONALD CLIFTON, chief navigator of the space-liner *Atlan Cloud*, stood gazing out of the big observation window of the bridge.

He was looking at something he could not quite understand, something which did not fit into his years of experience in the spaceways between Earth and Venus and Mars.

Presently he turned, speaking in his clipped voice.

"Have you a moment, Mr. Claxton?"

The second navigator glanced up from studying the astrocharts and moved to his superior's side. The commander motioned through the window.

"What in blazes do you imagine that is?" he asked.

Claxton gazed steadily. Here in the utter depths of space, some millions of miles from Earth—from which the liner was heading in the direction of Venus—a most unusual spacecraft was visible. In these sheer distances where no air intervened, where the sun blazed with relentless, blinding glory, it was hard to estimate mileage. The object at which both men were staring was probably 3,000 miles away—an enormous wheel, it seemed.

"Not the least idea, sir," Claxton said. "Looks a bit like one of those Martian flying saucers we had trouble with some time ago."

"Can't be that; they were all de-

stroyed. Anyway, that thing is much bigger. Get the reflector set up, Mr. Claxton."

"Right, sir."

The second navigator turned to the powerful telescopic apparatus and adjusted its light-trapping devices and screens as that it was gesticulating reflecting the distant object on to a broad viewing screen. The commander gazed at it and gave a long whistle of surprise.

"Not a dime, sir, as we thought," Claxton said. "It's a globe of some sort with glass circles all around it."

"Yes—if that's what they are," the commander said. "They might even be lenses of great size. Sixteen of them circling that ball like a necklace. There seem to be windows in the ball, too. I certainly never saw anything like it before. Apparently it's heading in the direction of Earth."

"It might be dangerous," Claxton sug-

gested. "Do you think we ought to warn them back home? They're in no shape for meeting any possible menace while rebounding everything from the great glacier catastrophe."

"It's not our job to issue warnings, Mr. Claxton. That's a panic action. We'll report what we have seen and leave it at that. Attend to it, will you?"

"Immediately, sir."

The commander returned his attention to the big window. It was his responsibility to get this huge liner safely to Venus, not conjecture on the meaning of a strange spacecraft. Nevertheless, he did wonder quite a lot about it as he watched its glittering circle slowly sink into the sky as in the direction of far-flung Earth.

On Earth itself the information concerning the weird craft did not excite any undue attention, chiefly because these in charge of world affairs had

more than enough on their minds in restoring order after chaos. Only a few months had passed since the whole world had been smothered in a cocoon of ice—the Great Glacier, as it had been called—created by the near-death of the sun. That the sun now blazed again upon the world and surrounding planets, as hot and friendly as of yore, was entirely owing to the combined sciences of Violet Ray Brant—the Golden Amazon—and Absa, a descendant of the lost city of Atlantis whose home now lay on the distant Red Spot of Jupiter.

The Amazon herself, acclaimed at last throughout the world for her stupendous feat in rekindling the orb of day, had virtually become dictatrix of earthly policy. Since she had always taken a leading part in world affairs, especially when scientific problems arose, her rise to absolute power really signified but little. She was pleased—and nothing more—that the Earth's inhabitants had at last decided to elect her of their own volition, otherwise nothing was changed.

Day after day she sat in the headquarters of central London, from which came all the world's orders,

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follow a course by itself, constantly blinding Earth with the ray, the position changing as Earth revolves and tides during her seasons. A slight adjustment of the Amazon moved slowly.

"In other words, before Quorne has taken with him six Earth men, among them Ethel and Harry Schofield, to your own planet, having this infernal machine, in that Earth-governed atmosphere, the population and such time as he can cash in on his terror tactics."

"That's how it looks."

"What do you imagine I do now?"

"I think I would have done had I been as virtuous as he. He will destroy what remains of my life. He will destroy me by my own—and establish himself as the ruler of Van—or rather Jupiter. As for Ethel and Harry, he'll take them and the women, the women in a race where all the females have died."

The Amazon said: "On my course now is to pursue Quorne to Jupiter. Were it not for Ethel I wouldn't make the effort."

Alma said: "I've never been able to understand your tremendous affection for Ethel, Vi. After all, she isn't your daughter."

"I know, but she is the kind of girl I would wish for if the world—The Amazon stopped abruptly, her expression of the fact that she had perhaps spoken, her inward longing too plainly. She saw something in the girl, a new, a new look came to Alma's handsome face.

"Never knew," he said drily. "If you married me, you might have a daughter like that—but far more beautiful, taking after you; and infinitely stronger, taking after both of us."

To kill the conversation the Amazon snapped her head back into place so that she could neither hear nor speak, then she turned and marched out of the control room and through the airlock. In a moment Alma followed her and they only spoke to each other again when they took off their suits in the Ultra's control room.

The machine, with no migration holding it to the globe, was already gathering speed. Its tremendous journey through the gulf to Jupiter. Behind was the globe with the six abandoned airplanes whirling round its slight mass like baby satellites.

"We have a nice trip before us," Alma said, as he prepared a meal on the small central table. "Jupiter's average distance is 400 million miles from here. I know because I've covered it—and it's very wearisome."

"Your hundred or four thousand, the difference being a mere matter of shrinking." The rough power in the planet to go to the ends of the universe went on.

They returned to the Ultra and after she set the automatic pilot, they sat down to a meal of concentrates.

"How did you make the trip?" she asked. "In the space-globe?"

He nodded. "It has been a small fleet of space-fliers inside it for emergency use. Since one of them has gone I suppose Quorne took it. Come to think of it, he's only got a few days' start on us, probably. It might even be possible to see him. I'll have a look after the meal."

They both ate in silence for a time, the Amazon also and following her own thoughts, at much to indeed that it gave Alma reason to chuckle.

"You surely don't think I'm still trying to pull something, Vi, am I?"

He smiled softly. "In my own defense, Vi, I would point out that I am still a gentleman! In case you have forgotten it I am, by descent, the highest ducality in the Atlantic world. I could have taken advantage of you hundreds of times while we have been alone together. I never have, but I never shall—and I'd thank you to remember it."

The Amazon gazed in surprise and then dropped her eyes to her meal. For just a moment she had glimpsed the old Albrecht as he sat at the table, wounded. She had seen the kindly dignity which lay beneath his surly manner. For years she had known him as she told him she had taken—and deserved—an oral shrinking.

Alma said: "You've never been near Jupiter, have you, Vi? That's all the more so, never than my 100-million miles. I know you spent some time in the space-globe with the Ultra, but I don't think you were where I first saw you through

our instruments—but of Jupiter itself you know best to say, I imagine."

"I've never been as far as the outer planets," the girl admitted. "Should I hope one day to include them in a federation of the solar system. All I know about Jupiter is that you've got your race occupy the only solid part on its surface—the 1,800-mile Great Spot—which you, yourselves, or your ancestors created out of the otherwise almost molten world."

"Of that 1,800 miles we occupy some 800." Along exploded the Spot is the most terrifying world you can imagine. We on the Spot have a gravity which is Earth-normal because of de-gravitating processes—the same process which raised Atlantis—but out of the influence of the first four centuries of that gigantic planet is felt."

He fell to musing, then continued: "Jupiter, outside the Spot which is completely enclosed under the dome which renders all inside it invisible, by polarized light, has an atmosphere of pure ammoniated hydrogen at the fluid temperature of 1,300 below zero centigrade. Add to that the countless lightning which rages, a gravitation three times stronger than Earth's vegetation of ammonium carbonate, intensely blue oceans of pure ammonia, and you have a world where life happily in these conditions of almost eternal night—in far Jupiter from the sun—then you have some idea of the kind of world it is. A horror world, for such as you and I."

"Which a wonder why your ancestors chose it as a planet on which to settle," the Amazon commented.

"That choice is because, his distance from Earth made him very difficult to study. Thanks to our polarizing dome, no cities can be seen and there the Great Red Spot looks deserted. We did not wish to be disturbed in our new abode."

"You spoke of almost eternal night," the Amazon said. "Hardly that, surely! You have Europa, Ganymede, Io, Callisto—nine moons altogether, one of other of them always shading light."

"True, but only about equal to weak daylight. I'm telling you all these things, Vi, so you'll know what to expect."

"For that I'm grateful—but why should we bother about them when our destination is the Red Spot, hardly different from conditions on Earth itself?"

"I'm thinking of Quorne," Alma explained. "It is trying to overcome him, we should be a serious manhood on any part of Jupiter beyond the protective dome will be finished. Both of us are strong, but not strong enough to hold ammoniated hydrogen and live. Whatever you have endured on other worlds will be as nothing compared to what might happen on Jupiter. The inner planets have conditions pretty similar, especially in atmosphere—but in Jupiter, we have the first really alien planet. Of Uranus, Saturn and Neptune—and far less Pluto—I know nothing. They're mystery worlds, and if it's anything like Jupiter they campaign that way so far as I'm concerned."

The Amazon made no comment. Jupiter as yet was no larger than a good-sized pea, his nine moons strung out in an apparently straight line in either side of his bright flickering points.

The Amazon said: "We'd better take it is time to rest."

"You take the first spell of duty," he said. "I'll call you in about three hours."

The girl nodded and left him at the control board. In a few minutes she had gained the little chamber she used as a bedroom and three herself laid back on the bed. She did not trouble to undress, or for that matter to try and sleep. She wanted to think.

What was she to do about Alma? Must she become a woman and admit that she loved him, or remain the cold, calculating scientist and finish her almost eternal life alone in ever increasing conquest?

Would marrying him make much difference after she had gained knowledge, perhaps a child or children in whom she could take an interest, as she had in Ethel.

She found her senses drifting. She was more tired than she had imagined. She watched the First Galaxy swirling into the void millions of miles away, and began to breathe deeply. Presently Alma came to the doorway

of the little room and looked at her in the twilight.

Coming forward he stooped, kissing her gently and smiled.

"Bury to take advantage of you, Vi," he whispered, as she remained unseeing. "But you'll see me again when you're awake."

The Ultra flew on the longest journey it had in its history. The orbit of the planet was passed and there seemed almost the empty reaches, dotted with swirling constellations of asteroids, remains of a long exploded planet.

Once through this danger belt, a task which the Amazon handled for herself, noting the Ultra's steady and powerful "manoeuvres" of shifting rocks and massive planetoids all balanced against each other and obeying primary laws, was nothing to imagine the path to Jupiter. He had grown now from a peevish rivet to learn his dimensions.

With the flying hours he became like a football, his massive layers of clouds plainly visible and his structure appearing enormous indeed, the effect of a bulging equator and flattened poles, the inevitable outline of a world still semi-liquid and bowed out in an acute throat, fairly round sections.

Fascinated by this view of the giant world, which view she had never seen before, the Amazon relaxed, and the outlook ports whenever she could, Alma at her side. Only occasionally did those distant, shadowy, faintly visible, by eternal hurricanes forever raging across the planet, part sufficiently to permit of a clear view of the surface beneath, and then it was one of fantastic rock formations, mainly bluish, or at times a brownish, and the light flared upwards which they were steadily heading.

"When we reach the atmosphere, Vi," he'd better let me take over, Alma said.

"Why? There's nothing I can't do with this machine."

Alma smiled. True—but I'm accustomed to the gravity and the wind, and I want to be sure that we can land on the Spot if at all possible. Remember, there's this time a much greater chance of a perpetual wind of something like 400 miles an hour."

The Amazon nodded and accordingly, when the time came, she relinquished her position at the controls.

The instant the Ultra plunged into that dense, savagely agitated atmosphere of ammoniated hydrogen, the machine shivered and twisted under the impact and for a while was borne along helplessly in the grip of the raging hurricane.

It was hard to realize in the isolated quiet of the control room that rank puffing swells of storm drove before an everlasting tornado which would have made an Earth hurricane seem the gentlest of breezes. The Ultra, however, shivered and twisted under the impact and for a while was borne along helplessly in the grip of the raging hurricane.

"As near as I can estimate it," Alma said, "the Spot is beyond that mountain range, there is a vast, flat, level, and there are no mountains on this world higher than 1,800 feet. The gravity stops anything becoming larger."

CHAPTER XIII

THE Amazon passed no comment. She was gazing down at wonder on a crystalline jagged, made up entirely of angles, bars, cubes and oblongs, after the fashion of frost on a window pane. It was beautiful and yet ridiculous, tremendously brittle life of self animals, lives more or less stationary, life was moving amidst this fantastic vegetation—animal in form, thriving in the deadly poison atmosphere.

"Equivalent of Earth animal life," Alma explained, as the girl drew her eyes to it. "There's a higher form, too, walking upright like a man. Squat, powerful, and surprisingly intelligent. The kind of creature who would make a fine plant full of swelling sacs a first-class dinosaur."

The rest? The power plant showed much more current it demanded to raise the Ultra in the massive gravity to clear the top of the 1,200-foot barrier. It was accomplished safely, however.

"At the moment you are Jive in his best light," Alma remarked drily. "The rest, though it is, does give some illustration—but at night the effect is appalling with only the moon.



Some Jupiter turns on his axis every 10 hours. There is a "Great Red Spot" night—Alma broke off. "There's where we want!"

"Lay off, Joe!" somebody shouted. "It stinks all I've got that that's the Golden Amazon you're talking to!"

She was with him in the first of a noticeable start, his puffly face turned toward the girl, she stared at him. "Golden Amazon?" she asked. "That's me, then Joe! Had nobody mistook her in his powerful arms."

"Golden Amazon nothing!" he cried. "You mean she got her hair like that? It just ain't possible!"

Flattening her hands against his chest, the Amazon thrust herself out of his grasp, a step, then two, then three, her right fist flung with blurring speed. Joe doubted as to her identity vanished at the first blow. The blow he absorbed lifted him from his feet and he sailed over the top of the nearest table. Half stunned he crashed on the floor as the Amazon's hand landed on his head.

Angrily the Amazon looked about her, but the man with the green drink had disappeared. The girl looked at her companion and raced to the door. In the distance, at the farther end of the little street, she just caught a glimpse of the window as he hurried round a corner.

She followed him, strutting along at the speed of a track runner, ignoring the astonished stares of the men and women she passed on the way.

Presently she gained more deserted regions. Her quarry was out of sight, but the compass guided her, she moved with less urgency now, realizing she could trust the instrument. No matter how she understood, she could not follow him right to the end of the universe if need be. Also, recalling there was a point where she could lose her identity—her hopes of secrecy having been blasted sky high by the odious strains of Joseph's music, she decided to wait in her pocket, and doffed her veil, revealing her Amazon features. She was so close to the man, she would need her full vision and not the limited scope of the surprising mask.

CHAPTER XIX

STEADILY, unobtrusively, like a tigre building her prey, she watched the houses of the city, the towers and domes of buildings, and at last, as darkness was settling and the temperature fell, she found the needle had become motionless and was pointing toward the old structure which she followed its direction and it took her to a roughly constructed rooming house. Five stories up, the Amazon stopped and consulted the needle. It was pointing to a window of the fifth floor—in the house of her mother, she went up the officer's gallery facade—and found it in the main corridor which turned out from the rough back facing.

As stealthily as a cat she climbed it and then edged her way along the parapet, entirely unperceived by the night drop to the ground as she moved her head. She peered into the room beyond.

It was lighted with a low-powered lamp and the Amazon, with her thick neck was sprawled on the bed, apparently exhausted after his long perambulation. The Amazon's eyes were closed, the glass and lamp down into the room.

Before the man on the bed had time to grasp what his lady companion had done, she was on him, she stopped at the bedside, her hands ready for instant action, her head looking up at her dandy from flattened eyes.

"I-I don't understand if he declared himself," I could have sworn I'd seen you once."

"You didn't, and you never will!"

The Amazon considered him fixly and his eyes shifted under the malignancy of her stare. Then it dawned on him that the eyes were watching him in shade. Instantly her left hand shot out and gripped his throat with felineish strength.

"So you are from Atlantis?" she breathed, leaning over him. "I knew the compass couldn't be mistaken—so I hunted at last with something should like a hypodermic syringe. His needle struck her outstretched arm, into the wrist, and she recoiled. She felt a trickle of blood—then with her right hand she seized the syringe and flung it straight on the floor, where it landed.

Her briefly diverted attention was sufficient to allow the man to escape

to break free. He half got off the bed, then was slammed back on again as the girl shifted her hand and brought her right foot down on his leg. A woman attended her for a moment. The face outside like a snatched picture, she was gone. She had her mouth in the face of Joseph Quorra. The iron grip on his throat pinched him, the sensation of the hand was overwhelming. About him. With it went black hair and a ball neck.

"Brother!" the Amazon said bitterly, looking at him. "You were a bad lot to think of. Perhaps I would have only understood from Atlantis that the compass does not understand your threats."

"But they do!" Quorra assured her. "What they do not understand is how to deal with me. What you do." He shifted uncomfortably. "You are an intelligent woman, Miss First, and I have occupied a high position in the affairs of my race. Can we not talk a little more—comradely?"

The Amazon refused for a moment and then, under her grip, but she remained wary. Quorra made no further attempt to attack her. Raising his hand, he called away the remains of his dinner.

"I really must congratulate you, Miss First. I don't know how you managed to break through my grip, but she remained wary. Quorra made no further attempt to attack her. Raising his hand, he called away the remains of his dinner.

"So is Alpha. So are all of us. Never mind how you did it. What you are doing is what you should do. How did you arrive here ahead of us?"

"A simple matter of international transportation. You have used the method myself many a time to move quickly from place to place. So has Alpha."

"I cannot think how you had the time to do it now we had penetrated the Quorra and slotted the atmosphere to enter it."

"That too, Miss First, has a simple explanation," Quorra smiled cooly. "I was not at the time. I had stepped I mailed myself in my laboratory. There was time for that. The police air took me to the house of the man who was under the dome. From my laboratory I deliberately smashed the dome with my hands and my arms. I was not of my race had perished. I planned to instantly transport myself to Atlantis—what remained of it, and I was working on the exact position, a complicated task over such a distance. The dome was broken, my progress by blocking the necessary pathways between my plane in it, hence my destruction of part of it. I resigned in Atlantis, as I had calculated, and it was an easy task to remove some of the machines—some of them in particular which generated a forcefield."

"All I had to do, through the telescope, was watch for your Ultra and I saw it. I saw it as it came to Earth. Instead you anchored it at the space-globe and I saw you all go within it. I did not know the nature of you, but I knew it would mean. Fully believing I had disposed of you I damaged myself with the device. I was in preparation for her disown engagement she departed once more, delirious with grief. I was in the laboratory. Lacking herself in she went to a clinical cabinet and removed a bottle medicine. With it she made a drop of blood from the inside of her forehead and captured it on a microscopical slide; then she set to work to examine it through high-power lenses."

Despite every known test she could give it with results there was a possibility of a mistake. She had studied the tiny dark puncture where Quorra had jabbed the needle. There did not seem to be any sign of inflammation. As a final test she x-rayed herself and measured heartbeats, blood-pressure, and temperature. All returned normally.

"Myrtle went," she decided, with a grimace, and stepped to the frame of the puncture from her arm. "The just about like Quorra to use water and leave the rest to me. I was in the laboratory. Lacking herself in she went to a clinical cabinet and removed a bottle medicine. With it she made a drop of blood from the inside of her forehead and captured it on a microscopical slide; then she set to work to examine it through high-power lenses."

shock, struggling. "If I cannot rule this race I can at least destroy it—and I have already started doing so!"

"What?" she asked, deliberately blotted thoughts afloat, has something to do with that, needle you jammed into me? The Amazon snatched. "What was in it?"

Quorra only smiled; then it vanished and she was alone.

"Answer the question! I'm not talking to myself!"

"I'm not answering anything," she replied. "I don't know what was in that syringe, none enough—and by then it will be too late, I think."

She was alone. The girl stated life from the Amazon whirled the ex-adverser from the bed and flung him violently against the wall. Her hand on his throat as she stood in the doorway. In my story she was not a powerful man.

"I'm not going to argue with you, Quorra," the girl stated life from the Amazon whirled the ex-adverser from the bed and flung him violently against the wall. Her hand on his throat as she stood in the doorway. In my story she was not a powerful man.

"I'm going to kill you, here and now, because I believe that is the safest thing for everybody. A man of your criminal tendencies and scientific skill is too dangerous to remain alive."

The girl's left hand raised her right and with relentless pressure she squeezed her fingers into the adviser's throat. He gasped and choked helplessly, struggling to break loose, but could not dislodge the steel grip of the woman.

At last he was forced to the floor, his cadaverous face purple. Only when he released, did the Amazon released him. He looked down at her calmly and stooped to examine him, then she peered at a sudden knocking.

"Mr. Bayliff!" a woman's voice called. "I've brought your supper, Mr. Bayliff."

The Amazon swung and darted for the window, vanishing in the same instant as when she had entered.

She returned to her headquarters in the administrative building to find Alpha in consultation with Chris Wilson. They both looked up at the brilliance of the cold-light glazes as the came in.

"After a great deal of trouble I managed to locate our friend fellow Quorra—after he had come to the dock and sitting down."

"That was her?" Alpha exclaimed. "I was sure she was a girl with syncretic time—" and the girl added the details of her adventure.

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men and two women who had been through the Jovian adventure.

"I don't quite know which side you took," the Amazon said. "I was told you were and smiled. "That suggests you are wearing or the robes of the Jovian."

"She returned his survey. He was stirred in immaculate evening dress which made his big figure seem even larger."

"Let's just call ourselves civilians. Alpha, shut me, and forget the rest—Chris Wilson. I was told you were and smiled. "That suggests you are wearing or the robes of the Jovian."

"That too long," he said. "I was told you were and smiled. "That suggests you are wearing or the robes of the Jovian."

"From what I hear," he said. "Ethel and Harry intend to be married next week."

"I'm sure they're admirably suited to each other," the Amazon responded. "Being a lawyer with perhaps one or two of her tendency to be a lawyer, she has her neck in some mad exploit or other."

"You should talk! Alpha commented dryly."

"She differs from me, Alpha, and you know it. She's a woman, happy girl with a long, long neck."

"I'm not a lawyer, and certainly not the strength. I'm not ordinary woman."

"Which is a new point with you?"

"It makes no difference to me, you know," he said. "If it comes to that I'm not a lawyer, and certainly not the strength. I'm not ordinary woman."

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CHAPTER XX

APPARENTLY Alpha had said as much as he intended to say in regard to himself and the Amazon. The week which followed he made no further reference to the subject. In any case he was busy with his scientific plans to help in the rebuilding of London and the world in general.

He was quite a few things to consider. He was quite a few things to consider. He was quite a few things to consider.

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"I'm dying, I know I am. And though I hate to admit it, there's only one person can save me and the rest of women—and that's Alina. What a glorious thought! She'll save me and it over too!"

"The wouldn't do that," Chris told her. "It's not that kind of man."

"But she'll save me," the groaning Jovian had swallowed the last of the contents of the antidote bottle. Alina was sitting at his feet. She stared forward anxiously.

"Why the excitement?" the Jovian asked.

"Why? Alina pulled inside his belt, and his thoughts hurried to see that the creature lived. It was necessary that he survive from Earth, to get that antidote and you consume it; isn't that enough to need sympathy?"

"Why must you make them the only one antidote?" the Jovian insisted, getting up to his feet. "There's time of it all around us."

Alina looked about him in the twilight and shook her head.

"You're wrong," he snapped. "There was only one antidote, and that was I."

"I can tell you exactly what it was made of," the Jovian explained, quivering. "The poison is a chemical of analyzing whatever touches it, and the poisons thereof. We have a higher science than this."

"But this was made up of various ingredients," he continued, and then gave them, each one a chemical variety familiar to Alina but unknown in Earth chemistry. "And the whole substance was to create a balance of elements and other anatomical cells. Anyway," the Jovian grinned, "it's a simple matter to make some more. Come over here."

Indignantly relieved, Alina followed the stout, powerful creature to the laboratory, where she stood watching in wonder as with superlative skill he measured out various quantities of chemicals from the bottles on the shelves. Apparently laboratory work came naturally to him, it seemed even more queer to Alina that a creature with such outstanding gifts should have no ambition to develop them and master his planet—yet there it was, the antidote had no quest of enterprise whatever.

As he drew drifted into two—then three, and then four, looking at the Jovian, Alina had filled them large vials with the same complete with their protective atomized crystals.

"It's a real medicine for me to lead these over and not get them," he confessed. "Well, I suppose it must be so. There is enough stuff in this laboratory to satisfy me for a long time to come. Do you think you'll have enough of the stuff here?"

"More than enough," Alina answered him. "It only takes a pinch of a drop to each woman who's dying. There's enough here to deal with all of them. If there isn't, I can always come back."

"But you can't be sure of finding me," the Jovian reminded him. "I might be anywhere. I do think you'll have enough." His thoughts seemed for a moment as he noticed Alina gazing about him warily. "Something troubles you, dearheart."

"Yes, I just remembered how much time has gone past. A team should have disappeared long ago and returned to Earth long before this. I can't imagine why it isn't."

"I'll find it," the Jovian said, pleasantly, and Alina swung on him.

"Why? For heaven's sake tell me! It has been done before. It's strange that I have, when I can get the transportation apparatus going in this laboratory."

"You won't. The poison in the atmosphere has rendered most of it useless. I've already checked on it. However, the reason you haven't reacted on you is because you're inside this dome. Nothing, not even radiation, will penetrate it from outside—or had you forgotten that?"

"Yes, I had," Alina admitted, startled.

"Of course! The beam will only react on me without any negative force behind it. I'd better get out quickly and see if by any chance the beam is still there."

"It swept up the three vials and hurried away."

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had hair and figure made-made, though not resembling any particular person. In general, the Amazon had seemed her from a composite of the best features of most women, avoiding all resemblance to herself. The "patience" which contained her own image, was looked away and only used as a vessel of grace. Power given to a woman, Goddess Amazon was, as the name, far too dangerous.

"She'll do," Chris Wilson said, as the woman, stepping to the side, looked at herself was giving her, and down mechanically. "You've done a nice job. VI, if necessary, there all we have to do is make thousands of them in the image of this woman?"

"That's it," the girl agreed wearily. "Over there, in that machine, is everything you need. Now I'd better tell the people what is intended."

She switched on the radio apparatus and began speaking. She spoke in a voice quite unlike her own. It looked harsh and vitality and was pitched in a dreary monotone. She outlined the facts concerning the growing deaths of the women of the world over, explained the hope of an antidote had not materialized, and concluded with a statement of her decision to create synthetic women to take the place of the drug natural ones.

"An antidote may yet arrive," she said finally. "If it does, well and good, if it does not, the race will at least go on living. That is my hope. If it so happens that I die, too, I at least have the satisfaction of knowing that I have done everything possible to keep our race alive."

With that she switched off and turned her burning eyes to look at Chris. His face was solemn.

"I just heard about Ethel," he said quietly. "Before I came in here to see the synthetic woman, I didn't want to disturb you. Ethel's going back, VI. She's taken all the restorative she can, but I'm afraid it's the finish."

"For all of us women, I'm afraid," the Amazon frowned; then she forced herself from her chair and looked at the synthetic being. "She'll give my body's mental orders and my own words," she explained. "I've made her that way—fine," she commented.

"Leave her and mingle with the people. Go to the labor centre and report yourself as Synthetic Number One. Take your instructions from there and follow them out."

The Amazon remained motionless. The woman frowned and motioned her. Then she went forward and

examined the creature carefully. At last she stood back, quivering with ironic laughter.

"What is it?" Chris asked sharply. "She's dead!" the Amazon cried loudly. "That I did not see to life with cosmic radiation and the disease has struck her down before she can even move. Probably she contained it from me as I made her—she's as vulnerable as a natural woman. We're better."

With that her vast reserves gave way at last and she sagged helplessly in Chris' grip, not as I found her on the floor, but as I had seen Alina for a moment, materializing out of the air near—

Her next realization was of looking at a high corner of the ceiling of her bedroom. By degrees she appreciated the fact that it was evening and a cool breeze was stirring the curtains at the open window. She felt neither ill nor well, just in a comfortable in-between state. She moved her gaze to look through the window toward the stars just commencing to glow.

"If I can't die," she whispered, "I could wish nothing better than to be allowed to roam out there forever. I have cast this Earth form. There's nothing more for a moment. But I do not want to die in such a way, with so little done."

"You're not going to die, VI."

The girl was too weak to move anything but her head. Her eyes settled on the figure of Alina standing at the bedside. He looked tired, for him, and the suit he was wearing was travel-stained.

"Alina!" the Amazon breathed. "Oh—thank God! You came back after all! I thought I'd lost you! What happened?"

"It was my own fault. I was inside the force dome on Jupiter and it blocked the return beam."

"I shall never be able to be grateful for leaving the team on just in time—The antidote! Did you get it?"

"I got it," he answered, then before he could speak further, the girl broke in on him again.

"Cure Ethel, Alina! Cure her before anybody else. If only you will, I'll marry you. I promise you that."

Alina looked down at her curiously. "With no race to perpetuate, VI, where's the point in this?"

"It's always had been, isn't it?"

"You want?"

"The girl was silent. With a smile, Alina stooped and kissed her.

THE FLYING RED HORSE

by

Frances Crane

A new Pat Abbott adventure in murder when Pancho, the dachshund, discovers a body.

COMING NEXT WEEK

CHAPTER XXII

In her laboratory, the Amazon, considering a synthetic woman as the weakest growth up and down entry side between the institutional benches. She was sitting in overall

"It's taken a long time for the women here the scientist to get the antidote. But you mustn't regret it, VI. Never. Now, give me your name."

He took it in his powerful hand as he gave her the answer. The Amazon winced momentarily as a needle stabbed, and for a moment or two she lay motionless. Then she gradually she realized that the deadness was leaving her limbs, that she was feeling the flow of blood that the clouds were clearing from her brain. The hollows of her features began to glow with the brighter lights come into her fine eyes.

"That's better," Alina nodded, and sitting on the bed edge, he put on a towel and began to dry her hair. For a moment or two she remained motionless, her tangled golden hair about her face. Then she turned toward him, her eyes challenging his. He saw in them the old Amazon glaze, the determination in her dark eyes.

"Why are you stopping here?" she demanded, picking herself away from him. "I've said I'll marry you, and I mean it. Kiss me and then help the other women who—"

She broke off, staring in amazement at Alina's sudden change of mind. For a moment she demanded an explanation when the bedroom door suddenly opened and Alina and Barry Schafeld, both of them, looking the picture of health. Only Alina's eyes were dead.

Feeling completely revitalized, the Amazon sat up.

"I thought you had begun to say thank-you, that Alina cut her short."

"I landed back on Earth, VI, just as you became unconscious after all my efforts. I thought I was going to die. For a moment or two I was revived, but bringing her back here, I was satisfied."

"I'll never give you, at least a week's more life. Then I distributed the antidote with full instructions, and I'll be back here in a few days."

"Your promising to marry me? I'll guard Ethel was your own reason to show that I really do love you. Having no more to think about, I'll have to think about you. I'll have to want to make you my wife."

"That I can satisfy my that I'll be normal and the banister which caused the trouble will have been isolated and destroyed."

The Amazon said nothing. She had rarely looked so completely astonished.

"This means," she said at last, "that you're leaving me."

"You lost yourself, VI. I didn't have anything to do with it."

For just a moment longer the hand-maid remained about her mouth, then it relaxed into a careful smile.

"I spoke out of turn," she admitted.

"I don't regret it, Alina. Nothing else would ever have made me break down and say what I really wanted to say."

She turned as a maid came in and handed the Amazon a letter.

"A special messenger just brought this, Miss Crane," she explained and went out. The Amazon read the letter in gathering amazement.

"I dated today and simply say 'London. That and goes on: Dear Miss Crane! I must congratulate you on having conquered the synthetic with which I felt sure I could exterminate this race, but I do not intend to be so easily defeated. I have little regard for you or his late highness Alina, and my ambition still remains to use my genius to create this solar system, if at all possible."

"I have added a quote of energy in my body which destroys any person who tried to control me. I have been able to find in me. This is an indication of the scientific power I possess. After you tried to control me, my intellect revived me, and I gave her an answer for my earlier disguise. You will never be able to control me. I have the time to properly examine me, otherwise you would have found my heart still beating. I look forward to having our acquaintance on terms which make it necessary to advance me to me. Sincerely yours, Goddess—Crane."

The Amazon lowered the letter and met Alina's. He reflected for a moment and then nodded.

"Just as well you did promise to marry me, VI," he decided. "To beat Quorne we have to need every skill and resource."

THE END